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NASA CUTS ISS MISSION SHORT AFTER ASTRONAUT TAKES ILL

The space agency said on Thursday a crew of four astronauts aboard the International Space Station will return to Earth earlier than planned

NO EMERGENCY, JUST BEING CAREFUL: NASA

The crew included NASA's Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke along with Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russia's Oleg Platonov. NASA did not identify the astronaut or the medical issue, citing privacy. The crew member with the 'serious medical condition' is stable. Dr James Polk, NASA's chief health and medical officer, said it was not an emergency, but NASA being careful

FIRST-EVER MEDICAL EVACUATION FROM ISS

- Two crew members, Fincke and Cardman, were to carry out a spacewalk for a rollout of solar panels. It was Fincke's fourth visit to ISS and Yui's second; and a first for Cardman and Platonov
- This was NASA's first medical evacuation from ISS though astronauts have been treated aboard for things like toothaches and ear pain

2030

IS TIME LIMIT NASA HAS SET TO BRING BACK THE ISS OUT OF ITS ORBIT

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'NOT ACCURATE': INDIA REJECTS U.S. CHARGE ON MODI NO-CALL

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Friday rejected claims by US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick that a long-pending India-US trade agreement collapsed because Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not place a phone call to President Donald Trump and termed the characterisation of events "not accurate".

Responding to Lutnick's remarks, the External Affairs Ministry said New Delhi and Washington have been engaged in sustained, detailed negotiations on a bilateral trade pact for over a year and remain committed to concluding a "balanced and mutually beneficial" agreement. The MEA also highlighted that Prime Minister Modi and President Trump spoke to each other eight times in 2025, covering a wide range of issues.

"We remain interested in a mutually beneficial trade deal between two complementary economies and look forward to concluding it," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Lutnick, speaking on the All-In Podcast, had claimed that the Trump administration was keen to finalise an early trade agreement with India after concluding a deal with the UK in May 2025. According to him, India was offered a limited window, "three Fridays" to close the deal, with the incentive of lower tariffs for early signatories under what he described as a "staircase" tariff framework.

"It was all set up. But you had to have Modi call President Trump. They were uncomfortable doing it. So Modi didn't call," Lutnick said. He further claimed that when India later indicated readiness to finalise a deal, it was too late. "Are you ready for the train that left the station three weeks ago?" he said, arguing that tariff terms had already hardened by then.

Trade talks formally began in February 2025 and included several rounds of in-person discussions, including a visit by a US delegation led by Deputy US Trade Representative Rick Switzer in December. Trump imposed tariffs of up to 50% on Indian goods, including a 25% levy linked to India's purchases of Russian energy.

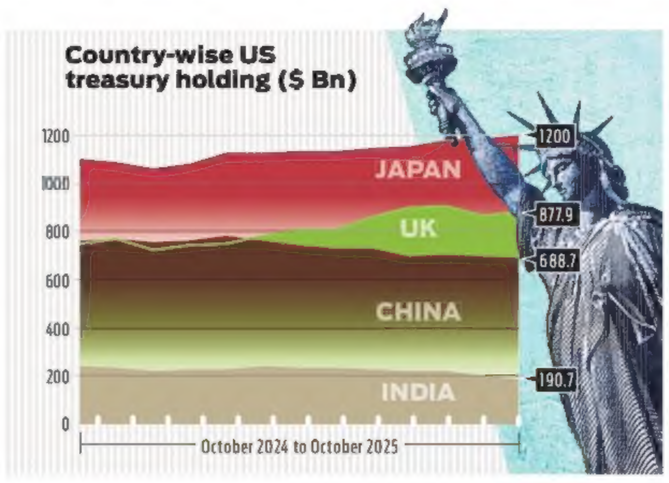
On energy sourcing, and the questions related to the proposed bill to raise tariff to 500% for energy ties with Russia, Jaiswal said India's position was clear and guided by global market dynamics and the need to secure affordable supplies for its 1.4 billion people.

'Minneapolis killing matter of concern'

India voiced concern over the killing of a woman by a federal agent in Minneapolis in the US. "We are closely following it," Jaiswal said. "We are concerned as we have a large Indian community in the US, including students, professionals and others."

First in 4 years: RBI cuts U.S. treasury exposure

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai



IN what may be a strategic shift towards foreign exchange reserve diversification and non-dollar assets amid rising global economic and geopolitical risks, the Reserve Bank of India has cut 21% of its holdings of US Treasury securities. According to the US Department of Treasury, RBI's holding of US bonds dropped from $241.4 billion on October 31, 2024 to $190.7 billion on October 31, 2025, marking a shift in forex strategy towards better asset diversification.

The US follows October-September as its fiscal year.

According to a Bloomberg analysis, this is the first annual dip in US treasury investments by RBI in the past four years. The drawdown comes despite relatively attractive yields in US bonds. During the period, the yield on the benchmark 10-year US bonds traded in 4-4.8% range.

Experts say this steep reduction is not driven by yield considerations but by a reassessment of the allocation of reserves, which hovered around $700 billion in October.

As part of diversification, RBI has been building its gold reserves. After a record 64 tonnes of gold buy in 2024, the central bank has been going slow in adding the yellow metal in 2025, which as of September-end stood at 880.8 tonnes. Gold's share in the total foreign exchange reserves shot up to 13.9% by September, up from 9% in the year-ago period.

In 2025, RBI made only modest direct purchases of gold to the tune of 4 tonnes till September, but significantly increased its domestically held reserves by repatriating over as much as 64 tonnes from overseas vaults.

China, too, reduced its treasury holding by 9.3% to $688.7 billion during the year.

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EXPRESS READ

Draft notification on GBA quota published

Bengaluru: The state government has published a draft notification of reservation for wards for elections to the five city corporations of Bengaluru. In all, 174 seats out of 369 have been reserved for women | **P2**

Parliament from Jan 28, Budget Feb 1

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Budget session of Parliament is likely to commence on January 28 with the Union Budget possibly being tabled on February 1, a Sunday.

Officials, citing the tentative schedule finalised by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, said on Friday that President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of the two Houses on January 28. The customary address of the President takes place on the first day of the first Parliament session of a year.

The two Houses will not meet on January 29 due to Beating Retreat ceremony.

Parliament will sit on January 30 when the Economic Survey is expected to be tabled. On January 31, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha will not meet. The Union Budget is set to be tabled on February 1.

After discussions on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address and Union Budget, Parliament will adjourn for a month-long recess on February 13. It will reconvene on March 9 and the session will conclude on April 2.

ID cards for autos set to make a comeback

DHIYA VEER @Bengaluru

The display card creates an added layer of accountability. It makes regulation easier

Karthik Reddy, JCP (Traffic)

WITH complaints mounting over fare refusal, overcharging and absence of driver identification, the Bengaluru Traffic Police have moved to strictly enforce an old but largely ignored rule, mandatory display cards in autorickshaws. In a circular issued recently, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy directed officers to register cases daily against auto drivers who fail to display identification cards, calling it a key public safety measure.

The circular follows repeated complaints from citizens, flagging issues like non-wearing of uniforms, excessive fares, refusal to go on hire and absence of display cards. The police said the display card allows commuters to identify drivers and creates a sense of security, especially for women passengers.

Karthik Reddy said that the rule is not new, but is being enforced more rigorously now with women's safety in mind.

CONTINUED ON: P2

UTTARAKHAND

Hill yes! How thousands are returning home

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

THE migration pattern that hollowed out Uttarakhand's villages for decades is showing signs of reversal.

As per an estimate, 6,282 people have returned across 13 districts in five years, swapping jobs abroad and in Indian cities for entrepreneurship back home.

Among those are 169 who left 27 countries including China, Dubai, France, Australia and the United States to establish ventures in agriculture, tourism and animal husbandry, said Dr S S Negi, Vice Chairman of Uttarakhand Migration Mitigation Commission (UMMC).

About 39 per cent have turned to agriculture and horticulture, data shows, while tourism and homestays account for 21 per cent, animal husbandry 18 per cent, and small businesses like shops and restaurants make up a further 6 per cent of returnee ventures.

"In Uttarkashi, returnees are successfully marketing millets online," said Dr Negi, the commission's vice-chairman. "The experience these people bring is invaluable. We expect this reverse migration trend to accelerate significantly."

Tehri district recorded the highest number of returnees, many leveraging global exposure to tap local resources in ways their migrant parents never imagined.

Whether the trickle metamorphoses into a flood depends partly on state support.

MEGA PROTEST MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee leads a protest march against the ED's searches linked to political consultancy firm I-PAC, in Kolkata on Friday | PTI | **P12**

HER HOME IN THE WORLD

90-yr-old Brit visiting Gokarna for 46 years says paradise lost

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS
@ Gokarna (Uttara Kannada)

IT is paradise lost for this British woman, who has been visiting Gokarna every year for the last 46 years. Now 90 years old, Antonia Chetwynd says that her age doesn't permit her to visit the best place for her in the whole world and she calls it paradise.

She came here for the first time in 1976 with a troupe of musicians from Arambol Goa, performing during Mahashivaratri. She had never imagined that she would develop a lifelong bonding with the town in just five days.

Hailing from England, this mother of five said over the decades, this abode of spiritualism, serenity and peace, which hosts the Atma Linga, has metamorphosed.

"I came here much before the hippies came. That was when everyone was allowed inside the temple and people came for spiritualism, seeking divine presence. But today, it has become more commercialised, and not everybody is allowed inside the temple," she said.

"I came here for peace of mind as it was secluded and exclusive. The beaches were empty and the air was good. Today, people are there everywhere. It is polluted and beaches are full of people. Gokarna is a paradise lost," she rued.

Antonia said she likes the Uma Maheshwar temple, which stands on an island, the most and hoped that the place would remain intact in the future. **P7**

I came here much before the hippies came. That was when everyone was allowed inside the temple and people came for spiritualism, seeking divine presence

Antonia Chetwynd

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